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by

Harry Osborne

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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers
154 West Randolph Street CHICAGO

WHEN SMITH STEPPED OUT

When Smith Stepped Out

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

Harry Osborne

"Fate tried to conceal him by naming him Smith"

CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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WHEN SMITH STEPPED OUT

CHARACTERS.

MEN

WILLIAM HORACE SMITH.....*Uncle Bill*
GEO. SMITH.....*His Nephew*
RICHARD KEENE.....*A Detective*
BOB STANLEY.....*A Wooer*

WOMEN

MRS. GEO. SMITH.....*Nellie*
MURIEL ARMITAGE.....*Her Younger Sister*
MISS WINSLOW.....*A Spinster*
HILDA.....*The Maid at the Smith's*

TIME: *The present.*

PLACE: *A Suburb of Chicago.*

SCENE: *The Smith's living room.*

ACT I. A Summer evening at the Smith's.
ACT II. The next morning.
ACT III. The same evening.

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Two Hours.*

THE STORY OF THE PLAY.

If there is a moral to this sprightly comedy, it is this, that it is dangerous to go out for a walk in the evening with a loaded revolver in one's pocket. George and Nellie Smith, a newly married young couple, are leading a happy, uneventful life until his Uncle Bill arrives from Australia to pay them a visit. Uncle Bill is a rich bachelor who, following the doctor's orders, always steps out for a walk in the evening. He is rather absent-minded, almost invariably putting on the wrong hat if there is more than one about and on this particular evening he leaves his watch at home and carries an automatic in his pocket. George warns him against it but there are hold-up men in town and Uncle Bill does not believe in taking chances. Now Nellie's sister Muriel is "keeping company" with a young man named Bob and he and Uncle Bill have never met. Coming over to call on Muriel that evening Bob meets Uncle Bill on the dark street and borrows a match. Walking on a few steps Uncle Bill feels for his watch, cannot find it and at once suspects that Bob, whom he doesn't know, must have picked his pocket. He runs after him, levels his revolver and says "Gimme that watch." Bob, thinking he is being held up, hands over his watch. In his excitement Uncle Bill loses his hat and after vainly searching for it returns home. For certain reasons Bob tells no one of his loss but Muriel and they have gone to notify the police when Uncle Bill arrives, hatless and out of breath. He then discovers that he has left his own watch at home and has robbed an unknown man.

Right here the plot becomes rather complicated. Uncle Bill confides in George, his nephew, and between

them they keep that stolen watch on the move. A detective has found Uncle Bill's hat and the manner in which he and George keep him away from that stolen watch is a lesson for crooks. It isn't only the detective's clutches that Uncle Bill has to dodge—there is a designing spinster who lives next door and is desperate for a husband. She is simply going to get Uncle Bill or die in the attempt. To make matters worse, Nellie has become suspicious of Uncle Bill and believes him to be an impostor and after their money.

Through all the excitement and third degrees, however, the love affair of Bob and Muriel runs smoothly along and sure enough just about the time Uncle Bill is on his way to the police station, their engagement is announced. Uncle Bill learns that Bob is the owner of the watch and in a hair line finish manages to get the stolen watch back into Bob's pocket before he has to spend the night in a cell. Nellie, however, still believes Uncle Bill to be a dangerous man and an impostor and is all packed ready to go back "to home and mother" when Uncle Bill proves his innocence and identity and invites them all to *his* party.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

Uncle Bill—Aged 55. Short and inclined to stoutness. Absent-minded, a little bald, short mustache and close-cropped chin whiskers. Cheeks smooth shaven. Dark business suit, frock coat and black soft hat. Wears round bow-glasses. He speaks quickly in a staccato manner, but moves slowly and walks rather blindly. He sort of stumbles ahead when he walks, the only movement being in his legs. The

upper part of his body is without movement, his arms hang limp and his head bobs a little with each step.

GEORGE—Aged 30. Short mustache, slender and active in movement. Light business suit.

KEENE—Aged 40. Smooth shaven, hard set face. Always with an unlighted cigar. Blue serge suit.

BOB—Aged 25. Immaculately dressed, smooth shaven, quite a dandy in appearance.

NELLIE—Aged 25. Pretty, refined, always becomingly but modestly gowned.

MURIEL—Aged 22. Pretty, vivacious, dressed in the latest fashion.

MISS WINSLOW—Aged 50. Slender, quick in speech and movement. Hair turning grey and very plainly made up. To make herself look younger she is always "all dressed up." Wears lots of jewelry even in the morning. Thin and plain looking.

HILDA—Aged 20. Swedish descent. Speaks slowly with accent and walks flat footed with long strides.

LIST OF PROPERTIES.

ACT I.

Revolver for UNCLE BILL.
Cigar and evening paper for GEORGE.
Gold watch for UNCLE BILL.
Gold watch with fob and charm attached for NELLIE.
Revolver and police badge for BOB.

ACT II.

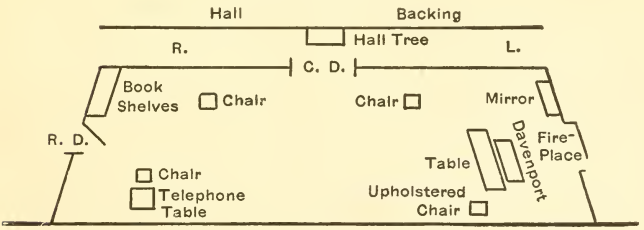
Gold watch and gold watch with fob and charm for UNCLE BILL.
Jar of jam for MISS WINSLOW.

Safety pin for NELLIE.
Soft black felt hat for KEENE.
Unlighted cigar for KEENE throughout play.
Cap for UNCLE BILL.
Note book for KEENE.

ACT III.

Small, brown paper parcel containing gold watch for MISS WINSLOW.
Pail of water for HILDA.
Soft black felt hat for UNCLE BILL.
Gold watch with fob and charm for UNCLE BILL.
Suit case for NELLIE.
Two legal looking papers for KEENE.
Taxi horn (to be worked off stage).
Revolver and police badge for BOB.

SCENE PLOT.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

WHEN SMITH STEPPED OUT

THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *Living room at the Smith's. There is a wide doorway at C. with portieres drawn back showing hall. On R. side of doorway is suspended a Chinese gong. A hat tree is placed against hall backing. Three hats on tree, one soft black hat which fits* UNCLE BILL *and a derby and soft hat too small for him. A door at R. leading to adjoining room. Below door is a small table or desk with telephone and chair. Above R. D. book shelves are placed against R. wall. At L. about C. is a fireplace. Above fireplace on L. wall is a mirror. At L. C. is a large oblong table and between table and fireplace a davenport with cushions, its back against the table. There is an easy chair up R. near bookshelves, a chair above table a little to the R. and another chair below table. This chair below table must be upholstered so that a safety pin can be pinned underneath the seat. The furniture and furnishings in general should suggest the home of a newly married couple living in a suburb of Chicago. It is evening and the lights are lit.*

At rise of curtain the stage is empty. The door bell rings off L. and in a moment HILDA *crosses hall from R. and exits L. In another moment* MISS WINSLOW *enters C. D. from L. followed by* HILDA.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Turning to* HILDA *who is in the hall.*)

Tell Mrs. Smith I just ran in to say hello.

HILDA.

Eyah, I know. (*Exit* HILDA *off R. Instead of sitting,* MISS WINSLOW *looks the room over to see if there have been any changes since she was last there. She is an inquisitive neighbor.*)

Enter NELLIE *C. D. from R. followed by* GEORGE.

NELLIE.

Good evening, Miss Winslow.

MISS WINSLOW.

Hello, my dear. I ran in *just* as I was—good evening, Mr. Smith.

GEORGE.

Good evening. Won't you be seated?

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Sitting below table.*)

Thank you, I can't stay. Are you through dinner? (GEORGE *walks over R. and stands.* NELLIE *sits above table.*)

NELLIE.

We're just finished.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*To* GEORGE.)

I saw a taxi drive up about five o'clock and presume your uncle has arrived.

GEORGE.

Yes, that was Uncle Bill.

MISS WINSLOW.

And how *is* Uncle Bill?

GEORGE.

Oh, fine. Digestion perfect and he's rich. That's a hard combination to beat.

MISS WINSLOW.

Yes, indeed; and you have never seen him before?

GEORGE.

Not to remember him. He went to Australia when I was very small, made his money and now is back to visit the scenes of his childhood.

MISS WINSLOW.

How romantic! (*To* NELLIE.) And he's not married?

NELLIE.

Well, we haven't inquired, but—

GEORGE.

No, he's not married.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*With a sigh.*)

What a pity. I just caught a glimpse of him and I think he's very handsome. (GEORGE *and* NELLIE *exchange glances.*) He didn't run when he saw me coming, did he?

NELLIE.

He went upstairs, didn't he, George?

MISS WINSLOW.

Poor man; he's probably tired after his long journey and wants to rest.

GEORGE.

No, he is changing his clothes preparatory to taking a walk. You see my uncle is a man of rather set habits, having lived alone so many years, and he usually steps out for a little walk right after his evening meal.

MISS WINSLOW.

Oh, I see. Now I *know* he has a romantic disposition. It is *so* romantic to walk in the evening—in the hush of the early evening.

GEORGE.

He's about as romantic as an adding machine—it's the doctor's orders.

MISS WINSLOW.

Perhaps he would like to have me go with him. I could point out some of the beauty spots of our suburb.

NELLIE.

We both offered to go with him but he says he prefers to go alone.

MISS WINSLOW.

Well, I declare! Aren't you afraid he may get lost?

GEORGE.

(*Laughing.*)

Oh, I guess Uncle Bill can find his way around although he *is* rather absent-minded.

NELLIE.

That's the first thing about him I noticed; but there—I mustn't talk about your uncle.

GEORGE.

Oh, he knows it. He asked me to help him keep track of things. He is continually laying things down and forgetting them. He always puts on my hat first instead of his own. If it wasn't too small for him he'd be wearing it.

MISS WINSLOW.

How interesting. Where is your sister this evening?

NELLIE.

Oh, Muriel is in her room primping, I suppose. Bob Stanley is going to call for her.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Self-consciously.*)

It beats all how the younger girls do dress and make up nowadays. (UNCLE BILL *is seen crossing hall from L. to R.*) I know I must look like a fright, you know I came over *just* as I was.

GEORGE.

Come in, Uncle Bill.

Enter WILLIAM HORACE SMITH, *C. D.*

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, oh, here you are.

NELLIE.

Miss Winslow, this is our uncle from Australia, Mr. Smith. (UNCLE BILL *comes down and* MISS WINSLOW *pounces on him at C.*)

MISS WINSLOW.

How-do-you-do, Uncle—I mean, Mr. Smith; there, I almost called you Uncle Bill.

UNCLE BILL.

Don't apologize, don't apologize, I'm used to it.

MISS WINSLOW.

I'm so glad you don't believe in formality. Please excuse my appearance, won't you? I am a neighbor, you know, and ran over just as I was. How do you like America? Have things changed much since you were here?

UNCLE BILL.

Everything seems smaller, except George, and how George has grown!

GEORGE.

(*Drawing himself up.*)

Yes, George is quite a boy now.

UNCLE BILL.

George, do you know where I left my hat?

GEORGE.

(*Laughing.*)

On the hall tree, Uncle.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, quite so; when traveling I find it best to

continue my daily routine as far as possible; so I hope you'll excuse me. My evening walk, you know.

GEORGE.

That's all right, Uncle. We want you to feel right at home. (UNCLE BILL *starts up C.*)

NELLIE.

Did you speak to your Uncle about his valuables? (UNCLE BILL *turns.*)

GEORGE.

Oh, yes, I meant to tell you, Uncle Bill; just lately a number of people have been held up on the street and robbed.

UNCLE BILL.

Bush Rangers, eh?

GEORGE.

I suppose that's what you call them in Australia. It might be well to leave your valuables here.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, I'm not afraid. All I have is my watch. I carry my money in a belt around my waist. They'd have to undress me to find it.

GEORGE.

That may be, but these hold-up men are desperate characters. It's money or your life with them.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Reaching into his right hip pocket and taking out a black automatic revolver.*)

Well, well, if any of them bother me I'll let them look at this watch dog.

NELLIE.

(*In fright.*)

Oh!

MISS WINSLOW.

My soul and body!

UNCLE BILL.

Don't be afraid; it never barks unless I say the word.

GEORGE.

(*Going C.*)

Why, Uncle Bill, you can't carry that gun.

UNCLE BILL.

I've *always* carried it.

GEORGE.

You can't carry it here. It's against the law.

UNCLE BILL.

Against the law? The hold-up men carry them, don't they?

GEORGE.

Yes, but—

UNCLE BILL.

I'm as good as they are. I don't believe in taking chances.

NELLIE.

I won't let George keep one of those things in the house. You might shoot someone by mistake. Please put it away.

UNCLE BILL.

Well, what am I going to do if somebody holds me up?

NELLIE.

I don't know. Call the police, I suppose.

GEORGE.

A lot of good that would do.

MISS WINSLOW.

The best thing to do is leave your valuables at home.

UNCLE BILL.

The best thing is to get the drop on them. (*He slips the automatic into his R. coat pocket.*)

GEORGE.

You're right, of course; but listen; there's a law here against carrying concealed weapons. If the po-

lice find that gun in your possession you'll be arrested. It will cause you no end of trouble.

UNCLE BILL.

How'll they know I got it?

GEORGE.

Well, they search suspicious looking characters.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Laughing.*)

Suspicious? Well, well, bless my soul! You think I—

GEORGE.

No, no; of course not; but you're a stranger in town and—

NELLIE.

(*Interrupting.*)

Please don't carry it. I know it will get you into trouble.

UNCLE BILL.

There, now; I'm sorry I ever showed it to you.

GEORGE.

(*Hitting him on the back*)

It's all nonsense, anyway. Nobody's going to hold you up.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Going up.*)

Of course not.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Going up.*)

Don't you find it lonesome walking alone, Mr. Smith?

UNCLE BILL.

(*Turning at hall tree.*)

Lonesome! No, no. It's a period of reflection with me. I think over what has happened during the day and what I'm going to do on the morrow. (*Takes* GEORGE's *hat from hall tree and puts it on. It merely*

balances on top of his head. GEORGE laughs.) What's the matter? Oh, that's not my hat. (*Puts it back and puts on his own black soft hat.*) How's that?

GEORGE.

Better. (UNCLE BILL *starts L.*)

UNCLE BILL.

Don't worry about me. I'll be back in a few minutes.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Coquettishly.*)

Au revoir, Mr. Smith. I hope I'll see you again *real soon.*

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, very likely, with pleasure. (*Exit* UNCLE BILL *off L. followed by* GEORGE.)

MISS WINSLOW.

What a charming man, and he's rich, too, isn't he?

NELLIE.

(*Coldly.*)

I don't know.

MISS WINSLOW.

He carries his money in a belt. They always do that when they have lots of it. Maybe he owns a diamond mine. I'll ask him.

NELLIE.

To think of his carrying around that terrible weapon. I'm afraid of him.

GEORGE *enters C. D. from L.*

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Suddenly.*)

Well, folks, I must run back to my little nest. Now do bring your Uncle over, won't you? (MISS WINSLOW *goes up C.*)

NELLIE.

He doesn't care much for society.

MISS WINSLOW.

Please explain to him I'm not a society girl—just a plain home body who loves to cook and sew, and have a man around the house.

GEORGE.

We'll ask him.

MISS WINSLOW.

Goodbye. Don't bother going to the door. Goodbye.

NELLIE.

Goodbye, Miss Winslow.

GEORGE.

Goodbye. (*Exit* MISS WINSLOW *C. D. off L.*)

NELLIE.

You see what she's trying to do?

GEORGE.

No. Who? What?

NELLIE.

Men never see anything. She's making a dead set at your Uncle Bill; that's what she's doing—and if we're not careful she'll get *him* and all his *money.* (GEORGE *laughs heartily.*) I don't see anything to laugh at.

GEORGE.

You mean she'll get Uncle Bill to marry her?

NELLIE.

That's certainly what she is after.

GEORGE.

Well, if Uncle Bill wants her let him have her.

NELLIE.

It isn't what *he* wants, it's what *she* wants, and a woman of her age isn't overlooking any chances with a matrimonial prize like Uncle Bill.

GEORGE.

If a woman wants a man she'll get him—is that it?

NELLIE.

Certainly.

GEORGE.

(*Teasing her.*)

Is that the way you got me?

NELLIE.

That was different. You made my life miserable until I accepted you.

GEORGE.

Of course. Don't worry about Miss Winslow. If Uncle Bill was the marrying kind he would have been in double harness long ago.

NELLIE.

We're his only living relations and it would be terrible if she got all his money.

GEORGE.

I don't know how much money he has.

NELLIE.

He must have a lot. He carries it in a belt: they always do when they have a lot of it.

Enter MURIEL *R. D. wearing a pretty evening gown.*

MURIEL.

All alone? I thought I heard voices.

GEORGE.

Miss Winslow just left.

NELLIE.

And what do you think, she's trying to fascinate Uncle Bill.

MURIEL.

She is? Oh, I think that's too funny for words.

NELLIE.

George thinks it's funny, too, but there's nothing funny about it to me.

MURIEL.

Perhaps not. (*Imitating* MISS WINSLOW.) No one can tell what we girls will do when we're desperate.

GEORGE.

(*Laughing.*)

What are you going to do to Bob Stanley this evening, that's the question. Just look at her. What chance has a man got?

MURIEL.

(*Pleased and turning around to show her gown.*)

Do you like my simple little dress? Bob's never seen me in it.

GEORGE.

That fellow's so crazy about you he never knows what you have on. You could wear an old gingham wrapper and he'd think you were dressed for the Charity Ball.

MURIEL.

Now, George, don't talk foolishly.

NELLIE.

(*Going up C.*)

Now's my chance to clean out that closet in Uncle Bill's room while he's away.

GEORGE.

(*Going R.*)

I have a letter to get off. (NELLIE *exits C. D. off R.* MURIEL *goes around L. to davenport.* GEORGE *turns at R. door.*) This suspense is awful. Make him propose tonight and get it over with.

MURIEL.

I don't know what you're talking about. (*Exit* GEORGE *R. door.* MURIEL *sits on davenport.*)

HILDA *enters C. D. from R. humming a little air off key.*

HILDA.

Ta-tum-ta-tum-ta-tum-ta-tum.

MURIEL.

Hello, Hilda.

HILDA.

(*Up L.*)

Hel-lo, Miss Muriel.

MURIEL.

You seem happy, Hilda.

HILDA.

Yah, I ban alvays happy.

MURIEL.

I think you must have had a letter today.

HILDA.

Yah, from St. Paul, Minne-sota. How did you know?

MURIEL.

Because you are singing. I can always tell.

HILDA.

My Ole in St. Paul, Minne-sota, has yot a yob.

MURIEL.

Really? Why, isn't that lovely.

HILDA.

Twelluf dollar a veek. If he save his monay ve yet married soon bime-by.

MURIEL.

Isn't that exciting!

HILDA.

Yah, it's nice. My, my, Miss Muriel, vat a lovely dress you're vearing.

MURIEL.

You like it?

HILDA.

I know, Meester Bob is coming.

MURIEL.

You're right, Hilda; that is, I expect him.

HILDA.

Does he save any monay?

MURIEL.

(*Laughs.*)

Not when he's with me.

HILDA.

Has he monay in the Postal Savings Bank?

MURIEL.

I never asked him.

HILDA.

(*Surprised.*)

Never asked him? Yumping yimming, if he don't save his monay you ban vasting your time. (MURIEL *laughs gaily.*) Two, t'ree times a veek he comes now.

MURIEL.

He is a nice young man and I like him.

HILDA.

You ban going be married by him?

MURIEL.

He hasn't asked me.

HILDA.

(*Holding up both hands.*)

You don't know if he saves his monay and you don't know if he vants tu marry you. Yumping yimming, ve don't do tings lak dat in de ole country. (*Bell rings off L.*) And har he ban again. (MURIEL *rises and* HILDA *exits C. D. off L.* MURIEL *makes a final inspection at mirror up L.*)

BOB *enters C. D. from L. and she meets him at C.* BOB *is a little out of breath and excited.*

BOB.

Hello, Muriel.

MURIEL.

Good evening, Bob.

BOB.

Charming. You're looking more charming than ever.

MURIEL.

You never forget to flatter, do you?

BOB.

If I did the sight of you would remind me, but it isn't flattery, it is—

MURIEL.

Why, Bob, you're all excited; you've been running.

BOB.

I always run when I start out to see you.

MURIEL.

Take off your coat and rest. It's warm in here.

BOB.

Thanks. (*He goes up to hall tree and hangs his coat and hat there.*) I had a funny experience on my way over here.

MURIEL.

You did? Tell me about it. (BOB *comes down and leans against table*, MURIEL *a little R.*)

BOB.

You know my watch?

MURIEL.

Yes.

BOB.

Somebody stole it.

MURIEL.

Stole it—stole your watch?

BOB.

Yes, my gold watch; the one my father gave me.

MURIEL.

(*Going to him.*)

Oh, Bob, you frighten me. How did it happen? Are you hurt?

BOB.

No, I'm not hurt, but somebody is going to *get* hurt.

MURIEL.

(*Stepping back.*)

Tell me about it.

BOB.

As I was turning the corner at Maple Street, you know it is rather dark there—

MURIEL.

Yes.

BOB.

A short, thick set man ran up behind me, stuck a gun into me right here (*indicating his stomach*) and said, "Gi'me that watch."

MURIEL.

He didn't shoot?

BOB.

(*Laughing.*)

No; I gave him my watch. What else could I do?

MURIEL.

Oh, how terrible!

BOB.

I wanted to hit him. I would only have had to hit him once, but there was that gun pushing into me and all he had to do was to pull the trigger.

MURIEL.

Oh, I'm glad you didn't hit him.

BOB.

I hope you don't think I'm a coward?

MURIEL.

Good gracious, no. You did just the right thing. Have you notified the police?

BOB.

No. I wanted to see you first.

MURIEL.

Call them up before he gets away.

BOB.

Oh, there's no hurry. (*Starts down R. to telephone.*)

MISS WINSLOW *runs in C. D. from L.*

MISS WINSLOW.

Hello, Muriel. (*Seeing* BOB.) Oh, excuse me.

MURIEL.

Come right in.

BOB.

Good evening, Miss Winslow.

MISS WINSLOW.

Good evening, Mr. Stanley. Did you just come in?

BOB.

Just a minute ago.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*To* MURIEL.)

Has Mr. Smith, George's uncle, returned?

MURIEL.

I haven't seen him.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*To* BOB.)

It must have been you I saw. Someone came in and I thought it was Mr. Smith.

MURIEL.

A terrible thing has happened, Miss Winslow. Mr. Stanley has just been held up and robbed.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Throwing up her hands.*)

My soul and body!

MURIEL.

Someone stole his watch.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Starting up C.*)

No one is safe any more. I left my side door unlocked. Someone may be getting in this minute.

BOB.

Oh, Miss Winslow.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Turning.*)

Yes?

BOB.

Please don't tell anyone about this. I—er—I have special reasons for not wanting it known.

MISS WINSLOW.

The police should know of it at once.

BOB.

Yes, yes, I'll notify the police; but please do not tell anyone about it, will you?

MISS WINSLOW.

If you don't want me to, certainly not. (*Exit* MISS WINSLOW *C. D. off L.* BOB *laughs,* MURIEL *looks at him and then she laughs.*)

MURIEL.

Well, we got rid of her less painfully than usual.

BOB.

Yes, but—

MURIEL.

I made a mistake in telling her about your watch, didn't I?

BOB.

Perfectly natural. I didn't ask you not to tell, although I meant to—you see—

MURIEL.

I promise not to tell anyone else.

BOB.

(*Seriously.*)

Thanks, Muriel. I would tell you the reason for my secrecy only—

MURIEL.

Only what?

BOB.

I—I'm afraid you'll laugh at me. (MURIEL *bursts out laughing.*) There; you're laughing already.

MURIEL.

(*Drawing down her face.*)

Forgive me; you're so serious. I won't do it again.

BOB.

(*Glancing around in fear of being overheard.*)

About a month ago, when these hold-ups started, I volunteered for special police duty. See, here's my badge. (*Goes to hall tree and takes badge from breast pocket of coat.*) I have to carry a gun, too. (*Gives her a glimpse of the revolver in his hip pocket.*)

MURIEL.

Oh!

BOB.

I'm a special officer. You can see the position it puts me in. If it ever got out that I had been held up, I'd be the laughing stock of the town.

MURIEL.

What else could you do when he pointed that gun right at you?

BOB.

That's just it. He was a desperate criminal; he didn't give me a chance.

MURIEL.

I think you *should* tell the police.

BOB.

(*Going down R. to telephone.*)

Yes, I suppose it's my duty to do that.

MURIEL.

(*As* BOB *takes up telephone.*)

Perhaps it would be better to go to the police station. You can describe the watch and the man better.

BOB.

Yes, and someone might be listening on the wire. Will you go with me?

MURIEL.

I'd love to. I've never been in a police station.

BOB.

(*Going up.*)

Let's go.

MURIEL.

I'll only be a second. (MURIEL *exits C. D. off R.* BOB *goes to hall tree and thoughtfully puts on his hat and coat.*)

MURIEL *enters hall again from R. wearing a light evening wrap.* BOB *removes his hat.*

MURIEL.

(*Calling off R.*)

I'm going out with Bob, Nellie.

NELLIE.

(*Off R.*)

All right, dear.

MURIEL.

(*To* BOB.)

It's nice of you to let me go along.

BOB.

It's a lark with you along. (BOB *and* MURIEL *exit L.*)

In a moment R. door opens and GEORGE *enters carrying the evening paper. He walks carelessly to davenport, sits, lights a cigar and begins to read the*

paper. After he is well settled UNCLE BILL *enters C. D. from L., excited, out of breath and hatless. He stops at C. and looks about.*

GEORGE.
(*Turning.*)
Hello, Uncle Bill.

UNCLE BILL.
Ah, there you are.

GEORGE.
What's the matter—been doing a Marathon?

UNCLE BILL.
I—I—did run a little.

GEORGE.
Where's your hat?

UNCLE BILL.
(*Feeling of his head.*)
My hat—haven't I any hat?

GEORGE.
Now you see, you shouldn't have gone on this walk alone. You should have taken me along to look after your hat.

UNCLE BILL.
I wish I had. (*Running his hand over his head bewildered.*) I seem to remember now. I started to run, my hat blew off, but I—I couldn't stop.

GEORGE.
Where *was* the fire?

UNCLE BILL.
A fire? No, no; a man stole my watch and I—

GEORGE.
(*Jumping to his feet.*)
Stole your watch?

UNCLE BILL.

You won't say anything more about my carrying a gun after this. If it hadn't been for this gun (*patting his side coat pocket*) he would have got away with it.

GEORGE.

(*Going to him C.*)

Now, Uncle Bill, you're excited. Tell me about this.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Mopping his forehead.*)

Well, you see—

GEORGE.

Sit down.

UNCLE BILL.

I can't sit down. You were right about there being Bush Rangers in this town. I was walking quietly along, minding my own business, when a fellow stopped me and asked for a match. I found a match in my pocket, so I gave it to him and walked on. Then I happened to think that he had acted rather suspicious and stood pretty close to me when I was searching for the match. He sort of brushed by me as he walked away. Then I happened to wonder what time it was and I reached for my watch.

GEORGE.

You reached for your watch—yes?

UNCLE BILL.

It was gone. I always carry it right here in my left hand vest pocket. It was gone.

GEORGE.

Say, that *was* pretty slick, wasn't it? To pick your pocket while you were looking for a match.

UNCLE BILL.

I should say it was, but I didn't hesitate a minute. I pulled out my gun and ran after him (*acting it*

out on GEORGE); he was just turning the corner. I shoved it against his stomach like that and I said, "Gi'me that watch." You bet he gave it back in a hurry and I'll bet he's running yet. (*Puts gun back in pocket.*)

GEORGE.

(*Hitting him on the back.*)

Great work, good old Uncle Bill, and you got your watch.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Proudly.*)

You bet I got my watch. He's got the fob and charm but I don't care about them. (*Takes it out of his pocket for* GEORGE *to see and without looking at it slips it back.*)

GEORGE.

They picked the wrong man that time, didn't they?

UNCLE BILL.

You bet they did. (*Feeling of his head.*) I'm sorry, though, about my hat.

Enter NELLIE *C. D. from R. She carries a gold watch in her hand with fob and charm attached, similar to the one* UNCLE BILL *has in his pocket.*

NELLIE.

(*Coming down R. a little.*)

You're weren't gone long, were you, Uncle Bill?

UNCLE BILL.

No, no. I came right back.

NELLIE.

(*Holding out the watch.*)

I was taking some of George's things out of your closet and I saw your watch on the dresser. (*Innocently.*) You must have forgotten it when you changed your clothes. (NELLIE *puts the watch in*

Uncle Bill's *hand and he stares at it open mouthed and thunderstruck.*)

Uncle Bill.

Er—ah—oh. Thanks! (*He lays his other hand against his lower left vest pocket. Tableau,* Nellie *very innocent,* George *amused.*)

Positions.

Uncle Bill, C.

Nellie, *R. C.* George, *L. C.*

Curtain.

WHEN SMITH STEPPED OUT

The Second Act.

Scene: *Same as Act I. The following morning.*

At rise the stage is empty. Uncle Bill *enters C. D. from R. cautiously. He looks carefully around and then makes the rounds of the room and furniture, going down R., crossing and up L. as if looking for something and fearful of being discovered. Finally, as he is nosing around the fireplace, he hears a noise and quickly takes a gold watch from his vest pocket and drops it behind cushion on davenport. He straightens up, stops, listens and then goes up C. to hall tree. There are still two hats there, a black derby and a light soft hat, both too small for him. He tries on the derby. It falls off his head. He takes the light soft hat from the hall tree and tries it on before the mirror. He finally gets it to stick at a ludicrous angle and then tiptoes up C. and off L.*

As soon as he is off Hilda *enters hall from R. tiptoeing along in exaggerated, comical manner. Before she is out of sight L. she stops, a door is heard slam off L., she goes to hall tree, examines derby, puts it back and comes down C.*

Nellie *enters R. D.*

Nellie.

Aren't you rather slow with your work this morning, Hilda?

Hilda.

Yah, but I get him done quick enough—bime-by.

NELLIE.

(*Referring to chair down L.*)

Did you telephone Mr. Benson about the chair?

HILDA.

Yah, I ban telephone las' night.

NELLIE.

When is he coming for it?

HILDA.

Dis morning, sometime, he say.

NELLIE.

Very well; if I'm not here, be sure he takes the right chair. This one, you know.

HILDA.

(*Seriously.*)

Yah—I know. Mr. Smith, dat Uncle, I mean, yust step out, teeptoe out, he steal de Meester's hat.

NELLIE.

(*Laughing.*)

Why, what do you mean?

HILDA.

He take de little soft hat and teeptoe out. I see him.

NELLIE.

Don't worry about him, Hilda; just get your work done.

HILDA.

He ban a funny faller. He eat no breakfast.

NELLIE.

I noticed that. Probably he wasn't hungry.

HILDA.

It ban pretty bad sign ven dey eat no breakfast.

NELLIE.

That doesn't concern us, Hilda. Have you straightened up his room yet?

HILDA.

Yah; it ban pretty bad, but I straighten him. Bed clothes (*gesturing*) all roll op, all mixed together, look lak somebody maybe have awful rough house.

NELLIE.

Probably he didn't sleep well last night.

HILDA.

Yah, his bed look lak vild horses sleep in it. I tink you better look out for dat faller. He dam-ned funny faller.

NELLIE.

(*Sternly.*)

Hilda, Hilda, never use such language. You better ring the breakfast bell again for Miss Muriel.

HILDA.

Yah, I ring her. (HILDA *taps the gong with stick attached and then exits C. D. off R.*)

Enter GEORGE *R. door.*

GEORGE.

Uncle Bill here?

NELLIE.

Hilda just said he went out wearing your hat.

GEORGE.

Oh, yes.

NELLIE.

Why didn't he eat any breakfast this morning?

GEORGE.

He was worried about his hat. It blew off last night when he was out walking—he's gone out to look for it, I guess.

NELLIE.

He is terribly absent-minded, isn't he?

GEORGE.

Yes; he could keep two men busy just looking after his hat.

NELLIE.

Won't you be late to the office?

GEORGE.

I telephoned I might be late. I may take Uncle Bill down with me.

NELLIE.

That's a good idea.

Enter MURIEL *C. D. from R. in a becoming morning negligee.*

MURIEL.

(*Cheerily.*)

Good morning.

GEORGE.

Good morning, sleepy head.

MURIEL.

Last call to breakfast, I suppose.

NELLIE.

Hilda has kept it hot for you.

GEORGE.

(*To* MURIEL.)

Well, what's the good news this morning?

MURIEL.

Good news? I've just finished dreaming?

GEORGE.

How about last night. Did he come to the point?

MURIEL.

Now, George, never try to be clever before breakfast.

GEORGE.

(*Emphatically.*)

Did he propose?

MURIEL.

Oh! Bob had something important on his mind last night. I don't believe he ever thought of it.

GEORGE.

Slow work, slow work.

MURIEL.

Who do you mean, Bob?

GEORGE.

No, *you.*

MURIEL.

Me for breakfast. I'll work fast at that. (*Exit* MURIEL *R. D.* GEORGE *sits in chair below table.*)

GEORGE.

Well, there's nothing for me to do but wait for Uncle Bill.

NELLIE.

Whoever heard of a man losing his hat.

GEORGE.

Funny, isn't it? I haven't stopped laughing yet.

NELLIE.

It's perfectly ridiculous.

Enter MISS WINSLOW *C. D. from R. She wears a different dress than in first act, but is altogether too much dressed for morning. She carries a jar of jam in her hand.*

MISS WINSLOW.

Good morning, folks.

NELLIE.

Good morning.

GEORGE.

All dressed up this morning. Going away?

MISS WINSLOW.

Now, don't you try to tease me. I ran over *just* as I was.

GEORGE.

Why, you look as though you had stepped right out of the latest fashion magazine.

MISS WINSLOW.

Oh, do make him behave, Mrs. Smith.

NELLIE.

He's not happy unless he's teasing someone.

MISS WINSLOW.

I wonder if your Uncle Bill likes raspberry jam. (*To* NELLIE.) I remembered you didn't put up any raspberries last fall and men do so love raspberry jam. Some evening when you have hot biscuits just get him to try it.

GEORGE.

If he don't, I will.

NELLIE.

(*Taking jam.*)

Thank you very much, Miss Winslow. I'm sure he will appreciate your kindness.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Shaking a finger at* GEORGE.)

Now naughty boy, don't you eat it all yourself.

GEORGE.

Well, I'm not going to let it spoil. I don't believe Uncle Bill likes raspberry jam, anyway. Besides, it's too rich for him.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Same business.*)

I know what *you're* after.

NELLIE.

(*Places jam on table.*)

I'll see that Uncle Bill gets it.

MISS WINSLOW.

How is the dear man this morning?

GEORGE.

Oh, he's fine. Just stepped out for a few minutes.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Indulgently.*)

His morning walk. Yes, of course.

UNCLE BILL *enters C. D. from L. wearing the little hat.*

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, good morning.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Effusively.*)

Good morning, Mr. Smith. How are you this morning? I trust you slept well last night.

UNCLE BILL.

Slept? Oh, yes, yes, certainly. Never knew a thing until morning.

GEORGE.

Well, I see we'll have to buy you a new hat.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Removing hat.*)

Oh, ah, excuse me. It's so small I forgot I had it on. (*Goes up and puts it on hall tree.*)

NELLIE.

Here is some raspberry jam Miss Winslow brought you.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, raspberry jam; my favorite delicacy. How very thoughtful and kind of you. (MISS WINSLOW *beams upon him.* GEORGE *rises, hands in pockets, disgusted.*)

GEORGE.

Dog-gone!

UNCLE BILL.

What's the matter, George?

GEORGE.

You know you shouldn't eat raspberry jam. It's too rich for your blood. It'll give you the gout, or appendicitis, or something.

MISS WINSLOW.

He's only jealous, that's all, because I didn't bring him some. I'm sure it won't hurt you. I put it up with my own hands. My grandmother used the same recipe.

UNCLE BILL.

Um, that's fine. I feel like a boy already. My

mother always kept it on the top shelf and I never got enough.

GEORGE.

I think we better start for the office, Uncle Bill.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, that's so. I don't want to make you late.

GEORGE.

I have a cap that's too large for me. You can wear that to town if you don't mind.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, quite so.

MISS WINSLOW.

Well, I must run back. I'm cooking a roast this morning and it might burn. You know, Mr. Smith, I just *love* to cook!

GEORGE (*sniffing.*)

I wondered what that was burning.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*To* NELLIE.)

Isn't he just too terrible? Goodbye, Mr. Smith.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, goodbye. Thank you for the jam. (MISS WINSLOW *and* NELLIE *exit C. D. off R. When they are well off* UNCLE BILL *speaks guardedly.*) I couldn't find my hat. Someone must have picked it up.

GEORGE.

That's too bad.

UNCLE BILL.

You—you didn't tell Nellie anything about last night, did you?

GEORGE.

Not a word. I just told her you lost your hat.

UNCLE BILL.

That's right: don't tell anyone. I'm in a terrible predicament.

GEORGE.

Don't worry. No one will ever suspect *you*.

UNCLE BILL.

Do you realize that unknowingly I held up a law-abiding citizen last night and relieved him of his watch?

GEORGE.

You were innocent. What of it?

UNCLE BILL.

What of it? I have that man's watch and I don't know what to do with it.

GEORGE.

Give it back to him.

UNCLE BILL.

Exactly; but I don't know who he was, and if I did I would have an awful time explaining to him or the police.

GEORGE.

That's right. The police wouldn't believe that story you told me for a minute. You better get rid of that watch.

UNCLE BILL.

I could bury it or drop it in the river, but that wouldn't be fair to the owner.

GEORGE.

If he was a decent fellow he would be satisfied to get his watch back.

UNCLE BILL.

Don't forget about the gun.

GEORGE.

That's so. If the owner of the watch *was* satisfied the police wouldn't let it drop. You'd be arrested for carrying a gun.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, I've thought it all out. I didn't sleep a wink

last night. We've got to find the owner of that watch.

GEORGE.

I searched the paper this morning, but evidently, if the owner reported his loss, the police are keeping it quiet.

UNCLE BILL.

I'll tell you. You call up the police station and ask them if they know who it was had his watch stolen last night.

GEORGE.

They would trace the call and be here inside of five minutes.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Thinking hard.*)

Don't telephone, don't telephone.

GEORGE.

Where is the watch? (UNCLE BILL *looks carefully around.*)

UNCLE BILL.

I hid it.

GEORGE.

Where? (UNCLE BILL *looks up R. at ceiling and points back of him.*)

UNCLE BILL.

Behind the cushion.

GEORGE.

(*Sarcastic.*)

Fine! Hilda will find it when she dusts.

UNCLE BILL.

I'll watch while you get it.

GEORGE.

All right, but you'll have to take it. I don't want it found on me.

UNCLE BILL.

I'll take it—for a minute. Go ahead. (UNCLE BILL *watches R. door and C. D. while* GEORGE *searches behind the cushions, tumbles them about. Just as he*

finds the watch UNCLE BILL *hears someone coming in hall.*) Hist! Hist! (UNCLE BILL *walks down C. hands behind his back carelessly flapping his coat tails, turns and walks up, same business.*)

GEORGE *is almost caught by* NELLIE, *who enters C. D.*

NELLIE.

Why, George! Having a pillow fight?

GEORGE.

(*Forcing a laugh.*)

Ha-ha, ha-ha! Uncle Bill dropped something; trying to find it.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Reproving.*)

Very awkward, very clumsy. I'm surprised at you.

GEORGE.

Oh, damn!

NELLIE.

What did you say?

GEORGE.

I said jam; Miss Winslow's jam, you know.

NELLIE.

(*Taking jam from table.*)

Oh, yes; this is hardly the place for jam.

UNCLE BILL.

Charming old lady, isn't she?

NELLIE.

(*At C. D.*)

Don't let her hear you say *old.* (*Exit* NELLIE *C. D. off R.*)

GEORGE.

(*Handing* UNCLE BILL *the watch.*)

Here, take it, you robber; it's yours.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Taking watch.*)

It's not mine; I'm not a robber.

GEORGE.

Why didn't you take his money instead of his watch. Money all looks alike. You could spend it—buy a new hat.

UNCLE BILL.

This isn't any joking matter. If I'm caught you'll be arrested also for harboring a criminal.

GEORGE.

We've got to find the owner of that watch.

UNCLE BILL.

I'll tell you. We'll put an ad in the paper something like this: "If the man who gave his watch"—we'll have to say "gave," otherwise we admit it was stolen—"if the man who gave his watch to a stranger on the night of the tenth will insert his name and address in this same space tomorrow, his watch will be returned to him in the same condition it was received." How's that?

GEORGE.

Rotten. The newspaper won't print a notice like that unless you pay them for it.

UNCLE BILL.

I'll pay them any amount they want. I would gladly pay a thousand dollars right now to be out of this.

GEORGE.

Pay them the money, they notify the police and the jig's up.

UNCLE BILL.

I forgot about that. There must be some way to advertise for the owner.

GEORGE.

Not without running an awful risk. I think the best thing to do is to hide the watch and sit tight. News travels quickly in this town and in a few days

we'll hear of someone who had a watch stolen. We'll mail them the watch and let them do the guessing. How's that?

UNCLE BILL.

Fine; but where're we going to hide it?

GEORGE.

We're not going to hide it. Did you ever read that story by Edgar Allen Poe about the letter the police searched for and couldn't find?

UNCLE BILL.

No, I'm quite sure I haven't.

GEORGE.

I think it's called "The Purloined Letter." The thief didn't *hide* the letter at all; he left it out in plain sight and it was so obvious that it was overlooked although every nook and corner was thoroughly searched. The theory is that we overlook the obvious. This is a good chance to test that theory.

UNCLE BILL.

Now, my dear nephew, let's not test any theories; let's hide the watch.

GEORGE.

Where could we hide it where a systematic search would not discover it?

UNCLE BILL.

Of course I don't know. It's your house; you know all the hiding places.

GEORGE.

I've been married two years but I haven't any—yet. Now, I've been thinking. (*He goes to the different chairs in the room and runs his hand under the seat of each one. He tries the chair below table last and stops there.*) We'll hide it right in this room.

UNCLE BILL.
(*Eagerly.*)
How can we—whereabouts?

GEORGE.
Have you a safety pin?

UNCLE BILL.
Safety pin? Lord bless you, no.

GEORGE.
(*Going up C.*)
I'll get one. (*Calling off R.*) Oh, Nellie!

NELLIE.
(*Off R.*)
Yes, dear.

GEORGE.
Have you a safety pin?

NELLIE.
(*Off R.*)
No, but I'll get you one. (GEORGE *comes down C.*)

GEORGE.
Let me see the watch.

UNCLE BILL.
Take it, take it; I don't want it. (GEORGE *puts his hands behind him.*)

GEORGE.
Neither do I. Is it going?

UNCLE BILL.
Yes. I keep it wound up so that the owner will find it just as he lost it.

GEORGE.
(*Listening.*)
I should say it was going. It must be full of carbon and only hitting on three. You can hear it a mile off.

As NELLIE *enters C. D. from R.*

GEORGE.

It's going to be a fine day if it don't rain.

NELLIE.

Here's your safety pin.

GEORGE.

(*Taking it.*)

Thank you, Nellie. A safety pin is only a little thing, but you've saved Uncle Bill's freedom if not his life.

NELLIE.

Uncle Bill's freedom?

GEORGE.

(*Holding up pin.*)

Without this he might be arrested and go to live in the jail.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Uneasy.*)

Oh, ah; now, George, you are going too far.

NELLIE.

What in the world are you talking about?

GEORGE.

Well, you see Uncle Bill lost a suspender button. He might lose a few more—he might not be able to find a barrel—and—but why go any further?

NELLIE.

(*Reprovingly.*)

You've gone quite far enough.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Relieved.*)

Oh, ah, ha-ha, very original, quite original.

NELLIE.

You aren't going to let him use that safety pin. I'll get a needle and thread and sew it on myself.

UNCLE BILL.

No, no; please don't bother. We—we have to hurry.

NELLIE.

(*Going up.*)

It's no bother and I won't be a minute.

GEORGE.

We can't wait now, Nellie.

NELLIE.

(*Pausing in C. D.*)

Just remind me of it tonight, Uncle Bill.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, thank you. (*Exit* NELLIE *C. D. off R.*)

GEORGE.

Now let me have the watch. (UNCLE BILL *hands it to him with alacrity.* GEORGE *puts the pin through the ring and holds it up.*) Now you stand guard. (UNCLE BILL *tiptoes up to C. D.* GEORGE *comes down to upholstered chair below table and tipping up the chair pins the watch to the lining underneath. Then rights the chair.*) Can you see it?

UNCLE BILL.

No, that's a wonderful place for it.

GEORGE.

(*Going up C.*)

Now I'll get that cap and we'll go to town.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Following him.*)

Good. I feel better already. (*Exit* GEORGE *and* UNCLE BILL *C. D. off R. In a moment the bell rings off L.*)

HILDA *enters R. door and exits C. D. off L. In another moment* BOB *enters C. D. from L. followed by* HILDA, *who crosses to R. D.*

HILDA.

(*Turning at R. D.*)

I'll tell her. (*Pause, then she smiles broadly.*) Yah she ban glad tu see you, I tank.

BOB.

I hope so. (BOB *laughs.* HILDA *exits R. D., in a moment*—)

MURIEL *enters R. D.*

MURIEL.

Good morning.

BOB.

Good morning, Muriel. Was it all right for me to stop?

MURIEL.

(*Cordially.*)

Why, surely.

BOB.

On my way to the office and just wanted to tell you —oh, but you look lovely this morning. I never before saw you so early in the morning.

MURIEL.

Is that what you stopped to tell me?

BOB.

Well, that's *one* of the things. I thought last night that you couldn't look any lovelier, but—well, you're just like a rose this morning.

MURIEL.

Bob Stanley!

BOB.

(*Hastily.*)

I don't mean that.

MURIEL.

(*Offended.*)

You don't mean it?

BOB.

I mean you are more beautiful than a rose.

(*There is a pause, they look at each other and break out laughing.*)

MURIEL.

Now be sensible.

BOB.

I wanted to tell you that I stopped at the police station this morning. They have a good clue and say they will have the robber before night.

MURIEL.

Isn't that fine. What is the clue?

BOB.

They found a black soft hat last night right near the corner of Maple Street where I was held up. That's the kind of a hat the fellow wore.

MURIEL.

Think of that. Then all they have to do is to find the owner of the hat.

BOB.

Exactly. Well, I'm off. May I drop in this evening?

MURIEL.

Surely. I want to hear all about it.

BOB.

(*Going up C.*)

Goodbye.

MURIEL.

Goodbye, Bob. (*Exit* BOB *C. D. off L.* MURIEL *starts R. but*—)

NELLIE *enters C. D. from R.*

NELLIE.

Who was that? Bob?

MURIEL.

Yes. Why?

NELLIE.

George is right. This is getting serious—early morning calls.

MURIEL.

This was a business call.

NELLIE.

Oh, indeed. You'll have to get up earlier and be dressed.

MURIEL.

(*Laughing.*)

He said I looked lovelier than I did last night. Those were his very words.

NELLIE.

That doesn't sound like business. (*Bell rings off L.*)

MURIEL.

Now who can that be?

NELLIE.

You must get dressed.

HILDA *crosses hall from R. to L.*

MURIEL.

All right, dear sister. (*Starts R. and stops.*) It might be Bob.

NELLIE.

Bob might as well live here and save Hilda's time running to the door.

Enter HILDA *C. D. from L.*

HILDA.

Dar is strange man, Meester Keene—

MURIEL.

I never heard of him.

HILDA.

Tu see Mr. Smith. (*Exit* MURIEL *R. D.*)

NELLIE.

Have him come in here, Hilda, and tell Mr. Smith —he's upstairs, I think.

HILDA.

Yah, I tal him. (*Exit* HILDA *C. D. off L.* NELLIE *gives a few touches to the things on table and*—)

MR. KEENE *enters C. D. from L.* HILDA, *behind him, crosses hall from L. to R.*

NELLIE.

Good morning, Mr. Keene. I am Mrs. Smith.

KEENE.

I want to see Mr. Smith.

NELLIE.

Won't you be seated? He will be here in a moment.

KEENE.

(*Sitting in chair below table.*)

Thanks.

NELLIE.

You came just in time for he's leaving for his office.

KEENE.

That's the reason I came early, to catch him.

NELLIE.

I see. (KEENE *sits motionless in chair but all the time is taking in with his eyes everything in the room.*)

KEENE.

(*Without looking at her.*)

Nice morning.

NELLIE.

Beautiful.

GEORGE *enters C. D. from R. and comes down.*

GEORGE.

Good morning.

KEENE.

(*Rising.*)

Good morning—Mr. Smith?

GEORGE.

Yes, sir.

KEENE.

(*Turning back his coat.*)

My name is Keene. I'm from the Central office.

GEORGE.

Oh, you're a detective or policeman or something like that. Sit down.

KEENE.

(*Sitting in same chair.*)

I am a criminal diagnostician.

(NELLIE *goes up L.* GEORGE *goes to little chair at telephone lower R.*)

GEORGE.

A criminal diagnostician. Well, well. What can I do for you?

KEENE.

I want to ask you a few questions.

GEORGE.

Fire away. (*All through the following* KEENE *never takes his eyes off* GEORGE.)

KEENE.

In the first place you are, no doubt, aware that there have been a number of stick-ups recently.

GEORGE.

Yes; it's hardly safe to step out in the evening any more.

KEENE.

I've been working here for several days and at last I have caught the man who has been terrorizing the neighborhood.

NELLIE.

Well, we're glad to hear that.

KEENE.

I say I've caught him. I haven't arrested him yet

but can do so any minute. I've got him under my thumb.

GEORGE.

You're a smart man, Mr. Keene. I congratulate you.

KEENE.

That's nothing; it's my business.

GEORGE.

Well, at any rate it's good business.

KEENE.

A criminal, no matter how clever he is, always leaves a clue. Last night a man was stuck-up and robbed of his watch just a few doors from here.

GEORGE.

(*Feigning surprise.*)

You don't say so. Who was it?

KEENE.

Never mind who it was. As I said, a criminal always leaves a clue. It's my business to find that clue.

GEORGE.

And you've found it?

KEENE.

Yes, sir.

GEORGE.

I don't suppose you would want to tell us what it is?

KEENE.

I wouldn't mind. It's this. (*He pulls* UNCLE BILL'S *black soft hat out from under his coat and lays it on the table.*)

GEORGE.

Well, well, you don't mean to say you have the robber's hat?

KEENE.

(*Watching him closely.*)

That's just what I have.

GEORGE.

(*Carelessly.*)

Now that's funny. I always imagined robbers wore a cap.

KEENE.

Not always. Now, Mr. Smith, do you happen to know whether or not there's a stranger in town from Australia?

NELLIE.

(*Impulsively.*)

Why, there's—(*she checks herself*).

KEENE.

(*Turning to her.*)

You were saying?

NELLIE.

(*Frightened.*)

Do—do you think this robber is from Australia?

KEENE.

I know he's from Australia. (*To* GEORGE.) You haven't answered my question.

GEORGE.

(*Fighting for time to think.*)

You want to know if I know if there is a *stranger* in town from Australia?

KEENE.

(*Watching him like a hawk.*)

Exactly.

GEORGE.

Well, you see, I don't spend much time here in the suburb. All my time is spent in town. A hundred strangers could come from Australia and I wouldn't know it.

KEENE.

That isn't answering my question.

GEORGE.

Give me time to think a minute.

KEENE.

Haven't you a man visiting you right now who is from Australia? (NELLIE *is much frightened and can hardly keep from screaming.*)

GEORGE.

(*Laughing as though it just came to him.*)

Why, of course. Yes, of course; Uncle Bill.

KEENE.

(*Taking a little red book from vest pocket and glancing at it.*)

Ah (*with satisfaction*), that coincides with my diagnosis.

GEORGE.

I was so busy thinking about your robber, I forgot all about old Uncle Bill.

UNCLE BILL *enters hall from R. carrying a cap in his hand and stops C. D.*

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, excuse me.

GEORGE.

Come in, Uncle, I want you to meet Mr. Keene. (KEENE *rises, right hand in his pocket, prepared for an emergency.* UNCLE BILL *comes down C.*)

UNCLE BILL.

What was the name?

KEENE.

Keene, from the Central Station.

UNCLE BILL.

Glad to know you, Mr. Keene. From the Central Railway Station?

KEENE.

(*Sternly.*)

From the Central Police Station.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, I beg pardon.

KEENE.

I wish to ask you a question, but first I want everybody to sit down. (GEORGE *sits on chair down R. at telephone.* NELLIE *hurriedly crosses and sits up R.* UNCLE BILL *and* KEENE *remain standing.*) (*To* UNCLE BILL.) Sit down.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Courteously.*)

After you, sir.

KEENE.

(*Ugly.*)

Sit down!

UNCLE BILL.

(*Sitting in chair above table.*)

Oh, ah, thank you, Mr. Cutter.

KEENE.

(*Sitting in chair below table.*)

Not Cutter, Keene.

UNCLE BILL.

Keene, not Cutter; I beg pardon.

KEENE.

What time is it?

UNCLE BILL.

(*Looks at watch.*)

Twenty-three minutes after eight.

KEENE.

(*After a long pause during which no one speaks or moves but* KEENE *listens intently and makes a notation in his little red book.*) There's a clock in this room; where is it?

GEORGE.

There isn't any clock in this room.

KEENE.

Now I warn you to be careful. There's a clock in this room but you have it concealed.

NELLIE.

We have never had a clock in this room.

KEENE.

Ever since I've been sitting here I have distinctly heard the ticking of a clock. Where is it? (UNCLE BILL *sits up very straight.*)

GEORGE.

There is a clock in the dining room. (*Motioning R.*) It must be that you hear.

HILDA *enters C. D. from R. and stands in doorway.*

NELLIE.

What is it, Hilda?

HILDA.

De man he ban come for de chair.

NELLIE.

Oh, yes.

GEORGE.

What chair?

NELLIE.

You know the chair in which Mr. Keene is sitting.

GEORGE.

What man? What does he want with it?

NELLIE.

The upholsterer, of course; the bottom is giving way.

GEORGE.

That's nothing, I'll fix it myself.

NELLIE.

I've asked you to fix it a dozen times. It will fall to pieces before you get around to it.

GEORGE.

Nonsense; I'll fix it tonight.

NELLIE.

I've heard that before. You'll excuse me, won't you, Mr. Keene?

KEENE.

(*Rising.*)

Oh, certainly.

NELLIE.

All right, Hilda. (HILDA *comes down to get chair.*)

KEENE.

Show me that clock in the dining room.

NELLIE.

(*Sarcastically.*)

With pleasure. (NELLIE *leads the way to R. door.* KEENE *follows and so does* UNCLE BILL. NELLIE, KEENE *and then* UNCLE BILL *exit R. door.* GEORGE *goes up C. to hall, where* HILDA *is with the chair.*)

GEORGE.

(*Taking hold of chair.*)

This is too heavy for you, Hilda. Tell the man to come in and get it.

HILDA.

Yah, it ban pretty heavy. (*Exit* HILDA *off R.*)

GEORGE *quickly unpins the watch from beneath chair and gives the chair a push R. so that it is out of sight. He stands in C. D. quickly sizing up room and then with sudden inspiration pins the watch to lower end of cord which runs through the Chinese breakfast gong. He then strolls down C., faces up and takes a look at it as* KEENE, NELLIE *and* UNCLE BILL *enter R. door.* KEENE *crosses down L. to about where he sat before,* NELLIE *crosses to fireplace,* UNCLE BILL *stays up R. and* GEORGE *crosses to lower R.*

KEENE.

Stand perfectly still and don't speak. (*Everyone obeys. After listening intently.*) It wasn't the clock

in the dining room I heard. (*Quickly.*) Where's the chair I was sitting in?

GEORGE.

The upholsterer got it.

KEENE.

At the back door?

GEORGE.

I suppose so. (KEENE *dashes up to C. D. and exits off R.*)

NELLIE.

George, what is this all about?

GEORGE.

(*Laughing.*)

He's trying to find a hold-up man and thinks he's got a clue.

NELLIE.

But why should we be subjected to all this indignity?

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, why of all places does he come here and bother us?

GEORGE.

Now don't fuss over it. He's got his own little diagnosis. Let's do all we can to help him.

NELLIE.

The idea is simply preposterous.

Enter KEENE *C. D. from R.*

KEENE.

He's gone. What's his name, where's his shop?

NELLIE.

His name is Benson, his shop is on Main Street.

KEENE.

(*Writing in his book.*)

I'll get him later. (KEENE *again comes down L. and faces* UNCLE BILL.) Where were you between seven-thirty and eight o'clock last evening?

UNCLE BILL.

Bless my soul, I don't know.

KEENE.

Why don't you know?

UNCLE BILL.

I don't keep a diary. I'll have to think.

GEORGE.

You must make allowances for my uncle, Mr. Keene; he's rather absent-minded.

UNCLE BILL.

Where was I, George, between eight-thirty and nine last night?

KEENE.

(*Savagely.*)

Seven-thirty and eight, I said.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, I beg pardon.

GEORGE.

I don't know, you were here, I guess.

KEENE.

(*To* UNCLE BILL.)

Did you step out of the house at all last evening?

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, I always step out for a little walk after dinner—the doctor's orders, you know.

KEENE.

I thought so. What time did you step out?

UNCLE BILL.

I don't know. I don't run on schedule.

NELLIE.

I'm sure he doesn't know, Mr. Keene, because before he went out he put on another suit and forgot his watch. I found it on his dresser after he left.

KEENE.
(*To* NELLIE.)
What time do *you* think it was?

NELLIE.
I don't know, exactly; it was probably somewhere around eight o'clock. We had a late dinner.

KEENE.
(*To* UNCLE BILL.)
Ah (*glancing at his book*), that coincides with my diagnosis. Are you from Australia?

UNCLE BILL.
Sydney, Australia; yes, sir, Mr. Sharp.

KEENE.
Not Sharp, Keene.

UNCLE BILL.
Yes, sir; I beg pardon. I always remember names by the association of ideas.

KEENE.
(*Rises and hands the hat to* UNCLE BILL.)
Is that your hat?

UNCLE BILL.
It *looks* like my hat.

KEENE.
I thought so. (UNCLE BILL *takes the hat, steps to C. and tries it on.*)

UNCLE BILL.
It *feels* like my hat.

KEENE.
I thought so.

UNCLE BILL.
How does it look, George?

GEORGE.
Looks fine on you—great!

KEENE.
Is that your hat? (UNCLE BILL *hesitates, takes it off, looks at it from all sides.*)

UNCLE BILL.
(*Doubtfully.*)

It—it's about the same color.

NELLIE.
(*Coming over.*)

Let me see it, Uncle Bill. (UNCLE BILL *hands her the hat.*)

KEENE.

Don't you know your own hat when you see it?

UNCLE BILL.

Not—not always.

(NELLIE *is looking inside at the sweat band.*)

KEENE.
(*Triumphantly.*)

You see Sydney, Australia, stamped on the band, don't you?

NELLIE.

Why, yes, but—(*she pauses*) here are the owner's initials, Uncle Bill, T. U. B. in gold letters. Your initials are W. H. S.—William Horace Smith.

UNCLE BILL.
(*Looking.*)

That's so, that's so; I didn't notice.

NELLIE.

This isn't his hat, Mr. Keene.

KEENE.
(*Going up and showing his anger.*)

I'm not asking you; I'm asking him. Is that your hat or isn't it?

UNCLE BILL.

No, sir; it's not my hat.

POSITIONS.

NELLIE. UNCLE BILL.
GEORGE. KEENE.

CURTAIN.

SECOND CURTAIN

KEENE *savagely takes the hat from* UNCLE BILL, *crosses up C. between* UNCLE BILL *and* NELLIE *and turning at C. D. pauses and glares at them all.* GEORGE *is laughing,* NELLIE *is staring at* UNCLE BILL *with suspicion and fear and* UNCLE BILL *is entirely at ease.* KEENE *exits quickly C. D. off L.*

THIRD CURTAIN.

Empty stage. All the characters enter from different entrances and bow and exit, UNCLE BILL *being the last one.*

WHEN SMITH STEPPED OUT

THE THIRD ACT.

SCENE: *Same as Act I. The same evening.*

At rise: *The lights are lit and* NELLIE *is discovered on davenport nervously glacing through the evening paper. The watch is no longer suspended from the Chinese gong. A straight dining room chair has replaced the upholstered chair down L.*

GEORGE *enters R. D.*

GEORGE.

Hello, where's Uncle Bill?

NELLIE.

He just stepped out.

GEORGE.

What, again?.

NELLIE.

I wish he would *step* out and *stay* out.

GEORGE.

(*Shocked.*)

Why, Nellie!

NELLIE.

I don't want to hear you call him Uncle Bill again. He is not your uncle at all.

GEORGE.

Nellie, Nellie; you aren't feeling well. You don't know what you're saying.

NELLIE.

Oh, yes, I do. He's not your uncle at all. He has probably murdered your uncle in Australia and now has come over to get *your* money.

GEORGE.

My money. That's the first time you ever admitted I *had* any money.

NELLIE.

He's an impostor, a thief and a murderer and you've got to get rid of him.

GEORGE.

For heaven's sake, I hope you haven't talked like this to Muriel. It would scare her to death.

NELLIE.

No; she always takes your part.

GEORGE.

Now, Nellie, don't get excited. I explained to you all about what happened to Uncle Bill last night. It was not his fault. He was the victim of circumstances.

NELLIE.

Can you stand there, George Smith, and tell me you still believe that story he told you about last night?

GEORGE.

Of course, I believe it.

NELLIE.

I don't. I won't sleep under the same roof with him another night. With that terrible gun he might murder us all in our beds.

GEORGE.

Nonsense. Uncle Bill wouldn't harm a kitten.

NELLIE.

How about the hat? You know as well as I do that it was the hat he wore when he came.

GEORGE.

I'll admit it did *look* like his hat.

NELLIE.

It *is* his hat. He lost his hat, didn't he?

GEORGE.

Yes.

NELLIE.

And Mr. Keene found it.

GEORGE.

He found *a* hat, yes.

NELLIE.

There can't be two hats from Australia, can there?

GEORGE.

I can't explain that (*laughing*), but did you see that detective's face when you proved it was not his hat?

NELLIE.

It proves he is not your uncle. His real initials are T. U. B., not W. H. S. Can't you see that he's an impostor?

GEORGE.

(*Doubtfully.*)

Well, I can't explain about those initials, Nellie, but I'll ask him.

NELLIE.

A lot of good that will do. Promise to get rid of him this very night or I'll pack a suit case and go home to mother.

GEORGE.

Now, Nellie, don't be unreasonable. I can't kick him out like that.

NELLIE.

I mean just what I say; if he doesn't go, I do.

GEORGE.

And let Miss Winslow marry him and get all his money?

NELLIE.

I don't believe he *has* any money, and if he has he *stole* it, and I don't want it.

GEORGE.

Now don't do anything rash, Nellie. (*Door closes off L.*)

NELLIE.

Here he comes now. Remember, either he goes or I do.

Enter MISS WINSLOW *C. D. from L. carrying a small parcel containing the watch.*

MISS WINSLOW.

Hello, my dears. I came over *just* as I was.

NELLIE.

(*Crossing R.*)

Please excuse me, I'm going to pack.

GEORGE.

Now, Nellie.

MISS WINSLOW.

Going to pack? Are you going away?

NELLIE.

I'm going to visit my mother for awhile.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Alarmed.*)

What about your uncle? I have a parcel for him. He hasn't gone?

NELLIE.

No, he's still here. You and George can look after him.

MISS WINSLOW.

Oh, won't that be lovely? You *will* bring him over real often, won't you?

GEORGE.

Sure, I'll bring him over and leave him. (*To* NELLIE.) Now, Nellie—

NELLIE.

What's in that parcel?

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Holding it out.*)

I don't know. The postman brought it this afternoon.

NELLIE.

(*Taking it and reading address.*)

"William Horace Smith, care of Miss Winslow." Now why, tell me why, does he have his mail sent to Miss Winslow?

GEORGE.

Search me.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Coquettishly.*)

Perhaps he wanted to be sure to meet me again. He knew I would bring it right over.

GEORGE.

That's right; you've guessed it.

NELLIE.

Nothing of the kind. It is very suspicious. (*Holds parcel to her ear and gives a shriek.*) Oh! It ticks! (*Holds it at arm's length.*) It ticks!

GEORGE.

(*Laughing.*)

What's the matter?

MISS WINSLOW.

My soul and body!

NELLIE.

(*Running around in a circle with parcel at arm's length.*)

It ticks, it ticks; it's going to explode; it's an infernal machine. (*Up center.*) Hilda, Hilda! A pail of water; fire, help, a pail of water!

GEORGE.

(*Running after her.*)

Nellie, Nellie; give it to me; wait a minute; listen.

NELLIE.

Take it, take it; I daren't drop it, we'll all be murdered.

GEORGE.
(*Getting parcel.*)
That's right; it *does* tick.

NELLIE.
(*In hall.*)
Hilda, Hilda, quick!

HILDA.
(*Off R.*)
Yah, I'm a-running.

GEORGE.
(*At R. C.*)
Now don't get excited; this isn't going to hurt anybody.

NELLIE.
(*Stamping her foot.*)
Oh! That's just like a man.

HILDA *comes splashing in C. D. from R. carrying a pail of water.*

HILDA.
I put him out. Vere is he?

NELLIE.
(*Putting her hands over her ears.*)
Careful, George; careful, don't drop it.

GEORGE.
I'll do nothing of the kind. It's all nonsense. Whatever it is, it belongs to Uncle Bill and we'll let him open it. Never mind the water, Hilda.

HILDA.
Fire all out. All right. (*Exit* HILDA *C. D. off R. with pail of water.*)

NELLIE.
(*Very angry.*)
That settles it; nothing could induce me to stay another moment. (*Exit* NELLIE *C. D. off R.*)

MISS WINSLOW.

Isn't your wife leaving rather unexpectedly?

GEORGE.

(*Helplessly.*)

Yes, but that's the way women do things.

MISS WINSLOW.

Isn't it so. We girls are all creatures of impulse. I'm just that way myself.

UNCLE BILL *enters C. D. from L. wearing new soft black hat which he hangs on hall tree in passing.*

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, good evening.

MISS WINSLOW.

Good evening, Mr. Smith. Did you have a nice walk?

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, indeed, charming walk. Beautiful weather.

GEORGE.

(*Handing him the parcel.*)

Here's a parcel for you. Miss Winslow brought it over.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Taking it, nervously.*)

Yes, yes, oh thanks. Er, ah, thank you, Miss Winslow, for the trouble.

MISS WINSLOW.

No trouble at all, I assure you. Now I'm going to see if I can't help Nellie pack. (*Exit* MISS WINSLOW *C. D. off R.*)

UNCLE BILL.

(*Up close to* GEORGE *and guardedly.*)

It's the watch.

GEORGE.

I guessed it.

UNCLE BILL.

Didn't know what to do with it, so I thought I

would let Uncle Sam take care of it for a day. I mailed it to Miss Winslow this morning.

GEORGE.

Very clever, you robber, but Nellie got hold of it, heard it tick and thinks it's going to explode.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Alarmed.*)

She doesn't suspect?

GEORGE.

She suspects everything and everybody. All women are alike—she—

UNCLE BILL.

(*Interrupting.*)

I'll wrap it in another paper and mail it to—let's see now, where shall I mail it this time?

GEORGE.

Australia.

UNCLE BILL.

No, no, I must return it to the owner as soon as he reveals himself. Have you heard anything, George?

GEORGE.

Not a word and I wish—

UNCLE BILL.

(*Again interrupting.*)

I have it; I'll mail it to your office.

GEORGE.

Oh, no you don't; they'll probably search my office.

UNCLE BILL.

It won't get there until morning. You can mail it out the minute it comes in.

GEORGE.

All right, all right; I'll take a chance, but get it out of the house.

Enter Miss Winslow *C. D. from R.*

Miss Winslow.

Your wife is very much excited and wouldn't let me help her pack.

George.

(*Going up.*)

Well, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to see if I can't help her *not* to pack.

Miss Winslow.

(*Archly.*)

You're not afraid to be left alone with me, are you, Uncle Bill? (*Exit* George *C. D. off R.*)

Uncle Bill.

(*Putting parcel in coat pocket.*)

Well, to tell the truth, a pretty woman is the only thing I *am* afraid of.

Miss Winslow.

Really? Oh, how perfectly thrilling. Is that the reason you have never married?

Uncle Bill.

I guess they are afraid of me, too.

Miss Winslow.

(*Sitting on davenport.*)

How could anyone be afraid of you? You haven't seen me start to run, have you?

Uncle Bill.

No, but—but you are probably a very brave woman.

Miss Winslow.

Oh, but I'm not. I'm only a timid, frail little creature, all alone in the world. Won't you sit down —here? (*Motioning him to sit beside her on davenport.*)

Uncle Bill.

Thank you. (*He sits in chair below table and she*

at once moves over to lower end of davenport to be near him.)

MISS WINSLOW.

See, I know you won't hurt me. Don't you ever get lonesome living all alone?

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, that's the reason I came to see George and Nellie.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Losing no time.*)

Haven't you ever thought seriously of getting married?

UNCLE BILL.

What's the use. No woman wants an old fellow like me.

MISS WINSLOW.

You might be mistaken. Somewhere in the world there is a frail little woman waiting for you, waiting for you to claim her for your very own.

UNCLE BILL.

Why haven't *you* ever married?

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Leaning towards him and very sentimental.*)

Like you I am waiting for the right person to come along to claim me.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Edging away.*)

But I didn't say I was waiting. (*Bell rings off L.*) You see I've given up waiting.

MISS WINSLOW.

I think middle-aged men are much more interesting than young men, don't you?

UNCLE BILL.

(*Pulling down his vest.*)

Ahem, naturally, of course, a man hasn't good sense until he's passed fifty.

HILDA *crosses hall from R. to L.*

MISS WINSLOW.

That's just what I've always said, and then, too, they're so much more attractive.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Swelling up.*)

You may be right, you may be right. Who knows?

MISS WINSLOW.

Somehow I feel that I can confide in you. For some reason I have always seemed to attract the younger men, but I never feel when I am with them that thrill of response in my heart that will tell me when the right man comes along. Don't you think we should always heed the promptings of our heart?

UNCLE BILL.

(*Looking at her in mingled fear and amazement.*)

Yes, yes, quite so; that's the reason I gave up smoking.

HILDA *enters hall from L. followed by* BOB, *who hangs his straw hat on hall tree.*

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Turns.*)

Good evening, Mr. Stanley.

BOB.

Oh, good evening.

HILDA.

Miss Muriel she ban vaiting in the parlor.

BOB.

Good, thanks.

HILDA.

It ban pretty hot night. Miss Muriel say have Meester Bob take off his coat if he vants tu.

BOB.

I'll just take you up on that. (BOB *takes off his*

coat and hangs it beneath his hat, then he exits through hall R. followed by HILDA.)

UNCLE BILL.

Who was that?

MISS WINSLOW.

Don't you know who that is? Why, that's Bob Stanley; he's keeping company with Muriel and folks do say that they're engaged.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, yes, yes. I've heard George teasing her about him, but we've never happened to meet.

MISS WINSLOW.

Oh, they're a charming couple. Don't you think real marriages are made in heaven?

UNCLE BILL.

(*Dryly.*)

Well, judging by the atmosphere in some of the homes I have visited I thought they might be made in the other place.

MISS WINSLOW.

Now you're cynical. I wonder if Mr. Stanley has found his watch yet? (UNCLE BILL *sits up very straight.*)

UNCLE BILL.

His watch. What about his watch?

MISS WINSLOW.

I thought maybe you heard that he got it back. There, I forgot I promised not to tell.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Trying to appear indifferent.*)

I—I didn't know he lost a watch.

MISS WINSLOW.

He didn't. It was stolen. Don't tell anyone I told you, will you?

UNCLE BILL.

Not me.

MISS WINSLOW.

I came in last night when he was telling Muriel about it.

UNCLE BILL.

You don't tell me. Well, well, when was it stolen?

MISS WINSLOW.

Last night.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Getting excited.*)

Now who would think it, who would think it?

MISS WINSLOW.

A man held him up on his way over here last night. It was when you were out for a walk. (UNCLE BILL *gets up and starts to laugh.*)

UNCLE BILL.

Ha-ha, ha-ha, what a coincidence, how very amusing. Ha-ha, ha-ha.

MISS WINSLOW.

I don't think it's funny. I'm afraid you'll have to see me home. I get so frightened whenever I think of it.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, of course; but you don't have to go just yet, do you?

MISS WINSLOW.

Not if you want me to stay. (UNCLE BILL *looks up towards hall tree, makes up his mind and then sits in chair again.*)

UNCLE BILL.

Speaking of getting married, perhaps you would like to try a little experiment.

MISS WINSLOW.

Oh, I'd love to. (UNCLE BILL *takes his watch with*

fob and charm from his vest pocket and hands it to her.) What a beautiful watch!

UNCLE BILL.

You notice that charm?

MISS WINSLOW.

Yes, indeed. I never saw anything like it.

UNCLE BILL.

No, I presume not. That is a very rare stone endowed with strange and unusual powers. It is found only in Australia and there are only two in existence.

MISS WINSLOW.

How very interesting.

UNCLE BILL.

They say that if you look into that stone for half a minute and never so much as take your eyes away, you will see the likeness of the person you are going to marry.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Excited.*)

Really? How perfectly delightful.

UNCLE BILL.

I've never tried it myself.

MISS WINSLOW.

I wonder if I dare try it?

UNCLE BILL.

Go ahead—there's nothing can hurt you. Just look intently at that stone for thirty seconds and see how it works.

MISS WINSLOW.

All I must do is to look at it?

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, you mustn't look away, not even for a fraction of a second, no matter what happens, or you

will break the charm. You must gaze at it for thirty seconds, but no longer.

MISS WINSLOW.

How can I tell when the time is up?

UNCLE BILL.

(*Taking parcel from his pocket as he goes up C.*)

I'll stay behind you and count for you. Look at it steadily until I finish counting thirty.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*In a flutter.*)

Oh, I'm so excited. (*She faces front on the davenport and holds the charm in front of her.*)

UNCLE BILL.

(*Breaking the string and undoing parcel.*)

All ready?

MISS WINSLOW.

Yes, ha-ha, I'm ready, and *so* excited!

UNCLE BILL.

(*Solemnly.*)

One—two—three—four (*and so forth he counts up to thirty and as he does so, never taking his eyes off her, he takes the watch from the box, tosses the paper and box off R. through hall and slips the watch in breast pocket of* BOB'S *coat. He speaks very impressively.*) Twenty-nine—thirty.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Turning.*)

I saw him—I saw him!

UNCLE BILL.

(*Mopping his forehead in relief.*)

Good; I knew it would work if we did it right.

MISS WINSLOW.

Oh, I must tell you. I could see him just as plain.

UNCLE BILL.

Nice looking fellow, wasn't he?

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Describing* UNCLE BILL *to the dot.*)

Perfectly adorable! About fifty years old but only slightly bald, short dark mustache (*looking into* UNCLE BILL'S *eyes*), brown eyes (UNCLE BILL *is getting scared now as she comes closer, is more friendly and describes him so accurately and his face shows it as he slowly backs away*), brown hair, and he has the cutest little chin whiskers. Tortoise shell glasses and he was just the right size, not thin, not fat, but just plump enough to look healthy and prosperous.

UNCLE BILL.

(*With a sigh.*)

That's a wonderful stone.

MISS WINSLOW.

(*Taking his arm.*)

Isn't it, though? I feel so grateful to you, Mr. Smith.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, I think perhaps I better take you home before, oh, ah, before it's too late.

MISS WINSLOW.

How thoughtful of you. (UNCLE BILL *gets away from her, goes up C. and starts to put on* BOB'S *hat. It is too large and rests on his ears.* MISS WINSLOW *stops at mirror up L. to primp a little and then goes up C. and joins him.*) Why that isn't your hat.

UNCLE BILL.

Bless my soul! You're right. I'm rather absent-minded at times, you know. (*He takes off hat, hangs it up and puts on his own.*)

MISS WINSLOW.

You do need someone to look after you. (*She takes his arm and they exit through hall off L.*)

NELLIE *enters C. D. from R. carrying a suit case, followed by* GEORGE *who is worried and remonstrating.*

NELLIE.

Well, I'm glad your precious Uncle Bill isn't here, anyway.

GEORGE.

I left him here with Miss Winslow. She's probably got him roped, thrown and tied by this time. (NELLIE *drops her suit case at hall tree and goes down R. to telephone.*)

NELLIE.

I don't care what she does with him.

GEORGE.

Now what are you going to do?

NELLIE.

You won't go to the station with me, so I'm going to order a taxi.

GEORGE.

It isn't that I don't want to go to the station with you. I simply do not want you to do this foolish thing. Uncle Bill will never get over it.

NELLIE.

I hope he don't.

GEORGE.

All right, all right. I'll go with you if you insist.

NELLIE.

(*At telephone.*)

You're too late; you've had your chance, now I'm going alone. (*Over telephone.*) Two hundred, please; that's right, two double O.

GEORGE.

If you'll tell me how to get rid of him I'll do it.

NELLIE.

That's strictly up to you. (*Over telephone.*) Wayside Garage? Please send a taxi to 405 Maple Avenue, Mrs. George Smith—that's right—right away. I must make the seven-fifty-five train. Thank you. Goodbye. (*Bell rings off L.*)

GEORGE.

Nellie, Nellie, dear, will nothing make you change your mind?

NELLIE.

Nothing unless you get rid of that Uncle Bill.

GEORGE.

But supposing you are mistaken. Supposing he proves his innocence?

(HILDA *crosses hall from R. to L.*)

NELLIE.

Let him explain about the hat. That's all I ask. That will prove whether he's your Uncle or not.

GEORGE.

All right. When he comes back I'll make him explain, and if he can't do it, out he goes.

NELLIE.

I'm not going to miss my train.

Enter HILDA *C. D. from L.*

HILDA.

Mr. Keene, the detectitive faller.

NELLIE.

Now you see, we'll all be arrested. Oh, why didn't I leave before.

GEORGE.

Have him come in, Hilda.

(HILDA *turns L. but* KEENE *has followed her in.*)

HILDA.

Yah, har he ban now.

Enter KEENE *C. D. from L. Exit* HILDA *R. through hall.*

KEENE.

Hello, where's your Uncle?

GEORGE.

I think he has stepped out.

KEENE.

I had your chair all to pieces. The watch wasn't in it.

NELLIE.

How could the stolen watch be in my chair?

KEENE.

That's a favorite hiding place, but (*taking two papers from his pocket*) I've got a warrant for his arrest and also a search warrant for this house.

GEORGE.

(*Angry.*)

Search anything and anybody you want, but get through. I've got troubles of my own.

KEENE.

I'm going to search his room.

GEORGE.

Come on and get it over with. (*Exit* GEORGE *R. through hall followed by* KEENE. NELLIE *walks nervously up and down C.*)

BOB *and* MURIEL *enter C. D. from R., both looking radiantly happy.*

MURIEL.

What's this Hilda tells me about your going away?

NELLIE.

I'm going away until George gets rid of his so-called Uncle Bill.

MURIEL.

I thought you liked him. What's the matter with him?

NELLIE.

He's an impostor and a thief. He robbed a man of his watch last night and the police are after him. He's not our Uncle at all.

MURIEL.

Nellie, how terrible!

BOB.

You say he robbed a man of his watch last night?

NELLIE.

Yes, and he carries a horrible revolver.

BOB.

I was robbed last night by a man with a horrible revolver. Can it be the same man?

NELLIE.

Why didn't you tell us before? It must be the same man.

MURIEL.

It must be, you were the only person held up last night.

NELLIE.

Haven't you met him yet?

BOB.

No, but if he's the man who took my watch, I want to.

NELLIE.

There's no doubt about it. The detective is upstairs now searching his room.

MURIEL.

But, Nellie, dear, you don't *know* that he is the robber.

NELLIE.

The detective knows it; that's enough for me.

MURIEL.

What a terrible thing to have a robber in the family.

NELLIE.

He's not in the family, I tell you; he's an impostor. I don't know his name, but the initials in his hat are T. U. B. Our uncle's initials are W. H. S.—William Horace Smith. I can't understand how George could be so imposed upon.

Enter KEENE *and* GEORGE *C. D. from R.*

BOB.

Good evening, Mr. Keene.

KEENE.

(*Scornfully.*)

Hello, young fellow. It's pretty late for you to be out, but you may have a chance to identify your property.

NELLIE.

Did you find the watch?

KEENE.

No, but I went all through his stuff and it looks very suspicious. He's probably got it on him.

Enter UNCLE BILL *C. D. from L. He hangs his hat on hall tree.*

POSITIONS.

UNCLE BILL.

KEENE.

BOB. NELLIE.

MURIEL. GEORGE.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Cheerily.*)

Hello, hello, having a party?

GEORGE.

Come in, Uncle Bill. Mr. Keene still thinks you stole that watch and wants to search you.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, quite so; how are you Mr.—Mr. Cutter?

KEENE.

(*Savagely.*)

Not Cutter, Keene, Keene.

UNCLE BILL.

Mr. Keene Cutter. I beg pardon, Keene, yes, of course.

GEORGE.

(*To* BOB.)

Are you the fellow who lost the watch?

BOB.

Yes.

GEORGE.

Why in thunder didn't you tell us?

BOB.

I saw no need of advertising the fact.

KEENE.

I have a search warrant this time. (*Starts to take it from his pocket.*)

UNCLE BILL.

Don't trouble, don't trouble; I'll take your word for it and I don't mind being searched, not in the least.

KEENE.

(*Sarcastic.*)

You're too willing. (*Stepping up to* UNCLE BILL.) Now don't try to pull anything funny when I'm doing this.

UNCLE BILL.

I won't—if you'll promise not to tickle. (KEENE *searches his pockets and pats him all over while every one looks on much interested. The last place he searches is the vest pockets and pulls out* UNCLE BILL'S *gold watch, looks at it and hands it to* BOB.)

KEENE.

Is that it?

BOB.

(*Looks at it quickly and hands it back.*)

No, that's not mine.

KEENE.

(*To* BOB.)

You're lucky they didn't get your badge.

(*Handing it back to* UNCLE BILL.)

You can keep it—for awhile.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, thanks. Is this the young man who lost his watch?

GEORGE.

I guess you haven't met each other. Bob, this is my Uncle Bill Smith—Mr. Stanley.

UNCLE BILL.

Glad to know you, sir.

BOB.

You don't look like a robber.

UNCLE BILL.

You are a very discerning young man. I'm not a robber; I'm what they call a suspect. Is that right, Mr. Sharp?

KEENE.

My name is Keene and you're not going to get off the way you did this morning, either. I have a warrant for your arrest.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, ah, what are you going to arrest me for?

KEENE.

I'm going to take you to the station, where we can search you right down to the skin.

UNCLE BILL.

You really want me to go to the station with you?

KEENE.

No, I don't *want* you to go; you're just *going*, that's all.

UNCLE BILL.

Just as you say. I have no objection. But while we're all here this reminds me of a funny experience I had not long ago. I thought my watch had been stolen and when I came home found I had left it on my dresser, ha-ha, ha-ha. (*He starts to laugh, looks around and sees every one sober and stops.*) None of you seem to think that's funny.

KEENE.

Any man who thinks that's funny is crazy.

UNCLE BILL.

Now as a matter of fact, Mr. Cutting—I mean Mr. Keene—haven't you in your wide experience found a great many people who report articles stolen and discover later they have merely mislaid them?

KEENE.

(*Looking at* BOB.)

Oh, yes, there's lots of crazy people in the world. Even the police are sometimes crazy. Come on, let's go.

UNCLE BILL.

All right. Oh, before we go, I would like to ask you, Mr. Stanley, if you are wearing the same suit of clothes now that you wore last night.

BOB.

No, I wore a different suit last night.

KEENE.

(*Taking his arm.*)

Come on.

GEORGE.

Do you want me to go with you, Uncle Bill?

UNCLE BILL.

No, no; don't trouble. (UNCLE BILL *goes to hall tree and puts on* BOB's *hat.*)

GEORGE.

That's the wrong hat, Uncle.

UNCLE BILL.

(*Looking at it.*)

Oh, ah, so it is; pardon me. (*Puts on his own hat.*) Is this your coat, Mr. Stanley?

BOB.

Yes, it is.

UNCLE BILL.

I'm very sorry you lost your watch, Mr. Hawk here—

KEENE.

Not Hawk, Keene, I tell you.

UNCLE BILL.

I beg pardon, Keene, yes, yes. Mr. Keene and I are going to do all we can to help you recover it.

KEENE.

(*Starting to drag Uncle Bill off L.*)

Come now, quit your stalling, you and I are going to take a walk.

UNCLE BILL.

Yes, yes, my evening walk, I always step out about this time, the doctor's orders you know.

GEORGE.

(*Going up C. quickly.*)

Wait a minute, Mr. Keene, there's something wrong here.

KEENE.

Talk fast, what is it?

GEORGE.

(*Turning to* BOB.)

Bob, I've known you a great many years, my Uncle is accused of stealing your confounded watch, now why didn't you tell me about it before?

BOB.

I didn't want anyone to know it, you see I'm a Special Police Officer—

GEORGE.

(*Interrupting.*)

Special Police Officer? Say, what's all this?

BOB.

Can't you see I didn't want to tell? It's bad enough to lose my watch without having the whole world laughing at me.

GEORGE.

Hold on now, this Special Police stuff, who said you were a Special Police Officer?

BOB.

I say so, I've been sworn in. (*To* KEENE.) Isn't that right, Mr. Keene?

KEENE.

(*Dryly.*)

Yes, but it isn't right.

GEORGE.

(*To* KEENE.)

Is he a Special Police Officer, Mr. Keene?

KEENE.

(*Sarcastic.*)

He *thinks* he is, but this Bird (*giving* UNCLE BILL *a little shove*) knew better. He didn't take any chances when he frisked his ticker.

GEORGE.

You got to show me, Bob, there's something wrong here.

BOB.

Why I can prove it easily enough. I've got a badge, a gun and *everything.* (*Showing his revolver and slipping it back in pocket.*) There's the gun and (*he goes quickly up C. to hall tree and reaches in breast pocket of his coat*) and here's the badge—(BOB *pulls out the badge and the watch together and holds them out in plain sight completely thunderstruck, everyone shows surprise and starts up a little.*)

(*From here on, quick action to final curtain.*)

KEENE.

(*Quickly.*)

What's that—is this your watch? (BOB *examines it, speechless.*) Is it your watch?

BOB.

Why—yes, it, it's going, too.

KEENE.

(*Angrily.*)

How'd it get there?

BOB.

I—I—why I don't know. I'm sure it was stolen. (KEENE *is thoroughly and completely disgusted. He drops* UNCLE BILL'S *arm and gives* BOB *a look of withering scorn.*)

KEENE.

(*Handing* BOB *the watch.*)

Special Police! Here take it and the next time you go out alone put a cowbell on it.

BOB.

(*Sarcastically.*)

You're a criminal diagnostician I believe—a great detective. Your specialty is—

UNCLE BILL.

(*Interrupting.*)

Finding watches—

GEORGE.

(*Interrupting.*)

And hats—

KEENE.

(*Interrupting.*)

And lunatics and boobs. (To Bob.) And say kid, put that gun of yours in a safe or some baby will take it away from you. (*Exit Keene L.*)

UNCLE BILL.

(*Takes* BOB'S *arm and they come down C.*)

Well, well, I'm glad you found it.

BOB.

(*Mystified.*)

So am I, but I can't understand it. I'm sure it was stolen.

UNCLE BILL.

I know. I thought I once had my watch stolen. I know just how you feel. (BOB *takes* MURIEL *by the hand.*)

BOB.

This has been a great day for me. May I tell them, Muriel?

MURIEL.

Yes, if you want to.

BOB.

(*To* UNCLE BILL.)

I feel that I owe a great deal to you, Mr. Smith; because when I came in a few minutes ago to see Muriel, I saw you and Miss Winslow having a cozy little chat. I don't know what it was, but after seeing you something gave me courage. I knew I had been wasting time, so I asked Muriel to marry me and she said "Yes."

GEORGE.

Good work! At last!

UNCLE BILL.

Congratulations! (*They all gather around* BOB *and* MURIEL *at C. and* NELLIE *takes* MURIEL *in her arms.*)

NELLIE.

My dear, dear sister. (*Taxi horn off L.*)

GEORGE.

Surely you're not going away now, Nellie?

UNCLE BILL.

Are you going away, Nellie?

GEORGE.

She was planning a little visit to her mother. (*Taxi horn again heard off L.*)

NELLIE.

The taxi is waiting.

UNCLE BILL.

Can't you postpone your trip until tomorrow? I want to get up a party to celebrate the glad event. I'll order another car and we'll all drive down to the city, go to a theater and have a jolly midnight supper. What do you say?

MURIEL.

Oh, splendid.

BOB.

Great!

GEORGE.

What do you say, Nellie?

NELLIE.

I'll go if you'll have your Uncle Bill explain about the hat.

UNCLE BILL.

The hat, what hat?

GEORGE.

She wants you to explain about that hat Mr. Keene brought in this morning.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, I see.

GEORGE.

You lost your hat but you said it wasn't yours, and while it looked like yours and fit like yours, it had some other initials in it.

UNCLE BILL.

Oh, yes, yes; quite so.

HILDA *crosses hall from R. to L.*

NELLIE.

Hilda, tell the taxi driver to wait a few minutes.

HILDA.

Yah, I tal him. (*Exit* HILDA *off L.*)

UNCLE BILL.

I'm very glad to explain. It wasn't my hat Mr. Keene found, just as I told him, although it probably was the hat I lost. You see, just before I sailed from Sydney, I went into a barber shop to get shaved and not until the steamer left did I discover that I had taken another man's hat by mistake. Mine was the better hat of the two, so I have nothing on my conscience. (GEORGE *laughs.*) Don't you believe me?

GEORGE.

Believe you. Say, after having kept track of your hat for two days I would believe you if you said you had taken a hundred hats by mistake.

NELLIE.

Please forgive me, Uncle Bill.

UNCLE BILL.

Forgive you, nonsense. This is my party. Let's get started. George, see if you can get another taxi. (GEORGE *goes down* R.)

Enter MISS WINSLOW *C. D. from L.*

MISS WINSLOW.

Hello, folks. I ran over *just* as I was. I saw a taxi drive up and was afraid somebody was sick.

GEORGE.

We had a sick detective, but he just stepped out.

POSITIONS.

MISS WINSLOW.

BOB. UNCLE BILL.

MURIEL. NELLIE.

GEORGE.

QUICK CURTAIN.

Ruth in a Rush

BY

LINDSEY BARBEE

A COMEDY, in 3 acts; 5 males, 7 females. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scenes:** 1 exterior, 1 interior.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Mrs. Brownell.....Ruth's Aunt
Juliet Raymond.....Ruth's Secretary and Friend
Ruth Macdonald Moore.....Always in a Rush
Susie.....A Maid
Leonard Bruce.....Poor But Aristocratic
Wayne Ashley.....Rich But Uncultured
Dwight Lambert.....An Eloper
Peggy Patton.....Another Eloper
Gilbert Lansing.....A Writer
Philip Grant.....A Millionaire
Sadie Sodastrom.....A Ticket Agent
Jean Moore Foster.....Ruth's Sister

Ruth in a rush—for a position! Ruth in a rush—for a train! Ruth in a rush—for the borderline! Under these three captions, Ruth Moore might have designated the most important era of her life. For, in her hurry to be Gilbert Lansing's private secretary, she unconsciously became the instrument of fate; during the eventful afternoon at the little waiting room at Sunshine Junction she was involved in a tangle of circumstances which resulted in the unusual experience of being handcuffed to a fascinating stranger; and in her sudden decision to cross the borderline, she obeyed impulse, defied convention, became happily engaged and decided that, after all, she had been perfectly justified in her life habit of being in a rush. And all this to the accompaniment of unfortunate suitors, stray lunatics and irresponsible elopers! Like Ruth herself, the spirited action and the merry comedy of this breezy play go with a rush.

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WALTER BEN HARE

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Plot: Concerns the mysterious disappearance of a young lawyer, the failure of an heir to appear on specified time, and the substitution of a bogus heir who turns out to be the very man named in the will, a masked burglar, and the theft of a mysterious package of letters. Rollicking comedy pervades the entire action, relieved at intervals by moments of pathos, and plenty of legitimate farcical action. There is no star part, not even a leading rôle, all characters of almost equal importance. Skeet, the good-natured, slangy, whole-hearted boy from the slums of New York, a great rôle for a young comedian; Mr. Man, the mysterious hero; Jim, the young lawyer who disguises as a deaf, old farmer; Teddy, the terrified young bridegroom; Doctor Stone, the scheming, but thoroughly natural villain, and the snappy, old Senator; Diana, the quick-tempered but lovable heiress; Mollie, the plucky little housekeeper, who hides her breaking heart under a brave Irish smile; Henrietta, the mysterious and dramatic lady from Honolulu; Elsie, the bewildered little bride who is forced to hide in the basement; Miss Loganberry, the romantic old maid who is struggling to preserve her youth, and Aunt Jubilee, the "cullud" cook-lady, whose every line is a laugh.

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For the Love of Johnny

BY

HARRY HAMILTON

A PLAY, in 3 acts; 6 males, 3 females. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scenes:** 1 interior, 1 exterior. In his original manuscript the author called this play "a play of human hearts," and a page of description could not better explain its character.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Ethel Banks.....The Niece
Harriet Banks.....The Aunt
Dorothy Banks.....The Daughter
Dick Wayburn.....The Coward
Jerrymeyer Banks.....The Uncle
Phil Osborne.....The Soldier
John Turkey-Legs.....The Indian
Father Ryan.....The Priest
Johnny Banks.....The Nephew
Mr. Woods.....The Stranger

Around an intensely dramatic situation, the author has woven a human throbbing story abounding in clean and clever comedy and genuine pathos. We do not love all the characters the way we do Ethel and Johnny but we are not indifferent to any for they are all intensely human. We follow the Cinderella-like form of Ethel through the play with tears and laughter; we fear Dick Wayburn; our hearts are won by the courage and unselfishness of Father Ryan; we grow fat laughing at Phil, the returned soldier; John Turkey-Legs inspires within us a wholesome respect for the native Red Man; Uncle Jerry wins our sympathy and forgiveness; we admire Dorothy, and we finally take back all we said about Aunt Harriet when in the last act she renounces the domestic trousers she has worn all through the play. No play since "The Parish Priest" or "The Rosary" has had a more appealing character of a priest than that of Father Ryan. A professional play, successful on the road, within the scope of talented amateur players. Stage directions and business unusually complete.

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The Real Thing After All

BY

LINDSEY BARBEE

An after-the-war comedy-drama, in 3 acts; 7 males, 9 females (2 are children, boy and girl). Time, 2½ hours. **Scenes:** 1 exterior, 1 interior.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Bobby Winton.....A Youthful Soldier
Ruth Meredith.....With the Gift of Understanding
Anne Meredith Winton.....In Love with Her Husband
Kate .....Mrs. Winton's Maid
Robert Winton.....A Successful Lawyer
Cecily Hargraves.....Richard's Fiancee
Thomas Gregory.....A Mystery
Alison Page.....Who Is Clever
Dennis.....Who Emulates Sherlock Holmes
Doris Thorne.....A War Bride
Edward Thorne ("Ted").....A War Groom
Captain Richard Winton....Who Does the Unexpected
Aimée....."A Little Bit of France"
Miss Ward.....Richard's Aunt and Housekeeper
Fifi.....A French Maid
Roger Atherton.....An American Aviator

Sometimes it is pretty hard to find the real thing after all—and Dick Winton, fresh from service, with a Croix de Guerre all his own and a dear French orphan to claim his care and affection, searches in vain until the Christmas spirit touches his eyes and gives him the magic vision. And while selfish Cecily, quiet Ruth and adoring Aimée unconsciously direct his destiny, clever Alison tries to decide between the mysterious aviator and the equally mysterious Tom Gregory, and a fascinating French maid plays havoc with hearts—and other things! The irrepressible Kate, in emulation of Dennis, assumes the role of detective and flourishes the stolen pearls at the crucial moment; the stranger, Atherton, proves a friend in need and establishes an identity, all by a packet of letters; and, as to the recovery of the missing twenty-five thousand —well, that is Bobby's story, and he tells it much better than anybody else can hope to do.

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An Early Bird

BY

WALTER BEN HARE

COMEDY, in 3 acts; 7 males, 7 females. Time, 2½ hours. **Scenes:** Private office of a railroad president; room in a cheap boarding house at Flagg Corners. Act I.—A bird in the tree. Act II.—A bird in the bush. Act III.—A bird in the hand.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Cyrus B. Kilbuck....President of the P. D. Q. Railroad
Tony Kilbuck.....His Son, Just Out of College
Mr. Barnaby Bird.....The Boss of Flagg County
Mr. Mulberry.....Chief Attorney for the Road
Bruce Ferguson.....A Clerk in the General Offices
Artie.....An Office Boy
Mr. Perry Allen.....A Young Gentleman Farmer
Jessamine Lee.....The Girl
Mrs. Van Dyne.....An Agent for the P. D. Q. Railroad
Imogene McCarty.....A Stenographer
Mrs. Beavers.....From Flagg Corners
Rosa Bella Beavers.....The Belle of Flagg Corners
Mrs. Perry Allen.....Jassamine's Chum
Dilly.....Mrs. Beavers' Hired Girl

"You see that door? On the outside it says Pull, but on my side it says Push! Get the idea? I had no pull to make my way, only push! And it has made me a millionaire. Understand? Push!" Thus Kilbuck tells his son, Tony, who has been expelled from college. With unlimited nerve and a light heart, Tony starts out to carve his way to fame and fortune and to win the girl he loves. On the rough journey he meets one Barnaby Bird who figures strongly in the play but he outwits him, puts a big deal over on his father, wins the girl he loves and all's well. Comedy features are introduced by a coquettish stenographer, a fresh office boy, a country belle and her mother, a landlady of a Flagg Corners hotel and last but by no means least, Dilly, the hired girl. **Price, 35 Cents.**

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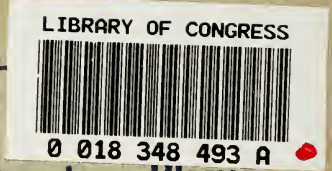

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